

December 17, 2007

Ian Bowles, Secretary  
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge, 9th Floor  
Boston, Massachusetts 02114

**Re: DCR FY09 Budget - Stewardship Council Approval**

Dear Secretary Bowles:

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Stewardship Council has reviewed budget information and submission prepared by DCR under the Patrick Administration's guidelines. We believe the FY09 Budget request appropriately focuses the 1.5% allowed, in addition to the "maintenance budget", on the right priorities: maintenance, public safety and key positions.

We also appreciate that the Administration asked DCR to identify how it would use an additional \$10 million appropriation to improve the condition of DCR's parks and facilities. We understand this request has been reduced to \$5 million which, while roughly triple the amount permitted for "new initiatives" under the budgeting guidelines to which other agencies must adhere, is half of what the Governor committed to provide during his campaign. That said, we support DCR's proposal to allocate the additional \$5 million to a beautification & maintenance effort, programming and community outreach efforts, and to a state park ranger and public safety initiative. \$5 million is well short of what is needed to adequately fund these efforts across the system, but we support and appreciate this additional allocation as a beginning step.

The following recommendations constitute the Stewardship Council's "approval" of the agency's FY09 budget as provided for in M.G.L. Chapter 21 Section 3C.

- 1) The Stewardship Council is very encouraged with the Beaches Commission's, the legislature's and DCR's success in significantly bolstering the funds available for improving and maintaining the agency's coastal and inland beach facilities and parks. We are pleased the proposed FY09 budget anticipates continuing this level of stepped-up funding for these important resources.
- 2) We support the the FY09 budget insofar as it provides funds needed for resource management plans, "gap" analyses and other tools that will permit the agency to develop far more specific information about what it will cost in terms of capital and maintenance investments to operate the entire system of parks at a standard of which we can all be proud. This has been a Council priority, and we especially appreciate Commissioner Sullivan's leadership and recognition of this important need.

- 3) We applaud the DCR staff's efforts to ensure any new funding, available to the agency under the 1.5% cap mandated by ANF, be directed towards the first two priorities described above, for contractor trades to help maintain urban and state parks, for an historical tree hazard assessment initiative, for additional field personnel and other investments to ensure public safety, and for resources to meet the agency's responsibilities under the Water Management Act.
- 4) The FY09 budget will only be adequate if DCR is permitted to complete its plans for current FY08 spending. In particular, we are encouraged that plans are in place and the staff is engaged in hiring an additional 106 positions for beaches, forestry management, rangers, and other posts, in addition to filling needed, vacant positions. **The Council strongly objects to ANF's decision to withhold over \$280,000 in "reserve draws" due to DCR as determined by ANF to cover DCR's increased costs associated with collective bargaining agreements. We hope and expect your Secretariat will do everything it can to cover the entire \$1.1 million in additional costs realized by DCR associated with collective bargaining agreements. Any amount less than \$1.1 million is a reduction in DCR's budget.**
- 5) The Stewardship Council further notes that the 1.5% allowed DCR under FY09 budgeting guidelines must first cover an anticipated \$1.16 million collective bargaining expense in FY09. Expenses associated with collective bargaining are anything but "new initiatives". **As above we urge you to advocate with ANF that collective bargaining-related expense increases be allowed to be covered under the "maintenance budget" guidelines so that DCR's \$2.5 million in allowed "new initiatives" are exactly that.**
- 6) Finally, we strongly support DCR's request for \$5 million in additional funding for additional: i) Beautification & Maintenance; ii) Community Outreach and responsiveness; and iii) State Park Rangers and Public Safety investments.

Sincerely,

Richard R. Cross  
Chairman

cc: Governor Deval Patrick  
Commissioner Richard Sullivan  
Secretary Leslie A. Kirwan  
Legislative Parks Caucus  
Stewardship Council